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Some on Ethics Panel Say Park Is 'Evasive'

Associated Press

Tongsun Park is increasingly evasive and is giving the House ethics committee incomplete and sometimes angry answers about alleged efforts to buy influence in Congress, several committee members say.

His evasiveness, they said after Park's second day of testimony yesterday, was notable especially on the question of whether he was a South Korean agent when he gave congressmen thousands of dollars.

One member said Park was particularly evasive whenever investigators confronted him with information tending to support the allegation that he made contributions to buy influence in Congress for the South Korean government, not just for his rice business.

Park, who contends he contributed to congressmen out of friendship and to help his business, acknowledged to reporters that "the questions were very tough."

"A witness does not like to face such tough questions," Park said,

"but I'm glad they are being tough so once and for all we can get the truth out."

The question of whether Park was a South Korean agent is important because the Constitution prohibits congressmen from taking money from a foreign agent. Until 1974, however, it was legal to accept contributions from a foreign businessman.

Reps. Bruce Caputo, R-N.Y., and Millicent Fenwick, R-N.J., were among the committee members who said Park was increasingly evasive, although they refused to say what kinds of questions he tried to evade.

Caputo said Park gave evasive or incomplete answers "many times" and seemed to have a good idea how much the committee already knows.

"He knows where we don't know things for sure but have some reason to believe something — and that's where he's cagey," Caputo said.

Rep. Fenwick agreed, saying Park was "cagey perhaps, sometimes angry, sometimes evasive."

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